

Claims

1. A method of preventing the infection of a computer network by a computer virus, where that virus can be spread by e-mail traffic, the method comprising:
 - installing at an e-mail gateway of the network an anti-virus application, which application scans at least incoming e-mail traffic for known viruses;
 - in the event that a new virus is detected by the provider of the anti-virus application, sending a notification of this event from the provider to the anti-virus-application; and
 - at the anti-virus application, responding to said notification by failing to deliver incoming e-mails or their attachments to their recipients within the network and causing these e-mails or attachments to be re-directed to a buffer for safe storage.
2. A method according to claim 1 and comprising establishing a communication channel between the anti-virus application provider and the anti-virus application using a TCP/IP or UDP/IP protocol, and sending said notification over said channel.
3. A method according to claim 1, wherein said notification is sent from the application provider to the application as an e-mail.
4. A method according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein said notification is sent from the application provider to the application as a result of a result of a request or enquiry sent from the application to the provider.
5. A method according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein, following the generation of a signature for the virus by the anti-virus application provider and the provision of that signature to the application, the application is arranged to scan the previously buffered e-mails or attachments for the virus, to deliver e-mails or attachments which are virus free to their recipients, and to cause the normal handling of e-mails at the e-mail gateway to be resumed.
6. An anti-virus application for installation on a network server on which is also installed an e-mail gateway, the application being arranged to interact with the e-mail

gateway to scan incoming e-mails and/or e-mail attachments for known viruses, the application having means for receiving a notification from the provider of the application which notification causes the application to prevent delivery of e-mails or e-mail attachments received at the gateway and to divert these e-mails or attachments to a
5 buffer for safe storage, and means for subsequently receiving a second notification from the provider which notification causes the application to cease preventing delivery of newly received e-mails or attachments.

7. A computer software storage medium having stored thereon an anti-virus
10 application for causing a computer operating as an e-mail gateway to scan incoming e-mails and/or e-mail attachments for known viruses,

the application being arranged to receive a notification from the provider of the application which notification causes the application to prevent delivery of e-mails or e-mail attachments received at the gateway and to divert these e-mails or attachments to a
15 buffer for safe storage, and to subsequently receive a second notification from the provider which notification causes the application to cease preventing delivery of newly received e-mails or attachments.

8. A method of preventing the infection of a computer network by a computer
20 virus, where that virus can be spread by e-mail traffic, the method comprising:

installing at an e-mail gateway of the network an anti-virus application, which application scans at least incoming e-mail traffic for known viruses using a database of virus signatures;

in the event that a new virus is detected by the provider of the anti-virus
25 application, calculating a checksum for the file carrying the virus or a relevant part of that file, and sending a notification containing the checksum from the provider to the anti-virus-application; and

at the anti-virus application, using the checksum to screen e-mails and/or their attachments for the virus until such time as a signature for the virus is received by the e-
30 mail gateway from the application provider.